



Artist Spotlight: Kristine Poole

We invited artist Kristine Poole to talk about her process, inspiration, and current body of work in her own words.

Body language is universally powerful. It communicates across cultures, often impacting us with a visceral intensity we find hard to explain. Verbal and written communications, on the other hand, can express subtle nuances of thought and ideas. In skilled hands, words can shift perspectives, re-create realities, and change the course of civilizations.

Through my work I have long explored these compelling ways in which we communicate, often juxtaposing body language with text to create layers of meaning. *Epic*, my first word-works series, combined

contemplative poses with words that highlighted stories and events from my own life journey.

The pandemic lockdown was a unique event in our time—much of the world endured experiences of isolation from their local communities that were, if not identical, then certainly parallel. For many people, this time seems to have been a combination of facing inward and reaching outward: of introspection, cocooning, and re-evaluation of life choices—and, at the same time, of sharing aspects of our lives in ways generally not seen before the pandemic.



Kristine Poole, *Beauty Will Blossom Again*, fired clay, 21" x 15" x 20".

Professional lives necessarily overlapped into private realms. Honestly, in all those virtual meetings, who *didn't* check out the books on the other person's shelves, or what they'd chosen as the background for that meeting? We all got peeks at ourselves through the eyes of others, perhaps because, for the first time, our personal spaces were being broadcast to people outside the circle of our closest family and friends.

Often online, personal connections came in the form of simple empathy—such as the frustrating but undeniably funny moments when a cat wandered across a keyboard during an important meeting, providing a brief respite from the tragedies happening outside our doors. More frequently, the technology, and the time on our hands, provided opportunities for us to connect to the

larger world community that we were physically sequestered from. Seeing people from so many different places grappling with similar matters brought to the fore the richness and depth of the experiential human paradigm we all share.

These impressions and conversations steered me to my current series. *Archetype* is a stylistic extension and expansion of my *Epic* series, and a quest into the undercurrents that define us. Reaching beyond my personal sphere, *Archetype* speaks to our collective existence, evoking fundamental human experiences that are at once profoundly personal and inherently universal.

Some of the imagery is based specifically in allegory, incorporating body language and symbols that hint at stories

for the viewer to imagine. Other works integrate figures with text that highlights the inherent narrative qualities of the human form.

In creating the sculptures with words, moving beyond relying solely on my own stories, I reach out to people around the world via social-media channels. I provide a cue or an image of the work and ask for responses. Theirs are the words and stories I inscribe on these sculptures. The result is a worldwide collaboration that chronicles the diverse yet related experiences of our time. The contributions of those others provide moments of insight into aspects of our collective human nature. *Archetype* invites viewers to see facets of themselves and their own lives at the heart of these sculptural metaphors.



Above: Kristine Poole, *Beauty Will Blossom Again*, fired clay, 21" x 15" x 20".

Beauty Will Blossom Again

For the text on this piece, I asked people online to respond to the cue "2021." People from around the world contributed their stories and thoughts—their languages include English, Italian, Dutch, French, Spanish, Finnish, Portuguese, and Swedish. Many wrote of the struggles they'd experienced over the last couple of years, but just as many spoke of hope and regeneration in the face of challenging times.



Kristine Poole, *Overcome*, fired clay, 24" x 44" x 16".

Overcome

This sculpture offers a physical metaphor of an experience most are familiar with, but perhaps provides more of a question than a statement—is the figure overcoming, or being overcome? The pattern of the words represents how our circumstances, experiences, thoughts, choices, and words might hobble us for a time, but ultimately offers the hope that we are always able to get back up again.

The texts were collected from people all over the world. Online, I asked people to respond to what the sculpture made them feel or think, and included their contributions in English, French, Swedish, Finnish, Spanish, and other languages, including this example in Portuguese, from Rafael Mifano: “Quanto mais fundo caio, mais forte me levanto”—The deeper I fall, the stronger I rise.

—Kristine Poole